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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Property Address:	<b>448 Ridge Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Square Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	<b>6E</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>January 29, 2015</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#15-061</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision
		<input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology

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The applicant, Suzanne Reatig Architecture on behalf of Ridge Lofts, LLC, seeks continuing concept review for construction of four three-story brick and metal rowhouses with a total of 8 residential units at 448 Ridge St NW, currently a vacant lot in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Pages from the previous concept are included for the purpose of comparing them to the revised design.

### **Previous Board Action**

In December 2014 the Board's discussion focused on the compatibility of the proposed third story as it was expressed on Ridge Street in relation to the surrounding context of two-story rowhouses. That concept had a third story setback of 2'6" from the front property line that incorporated balconies of horizontal railings. The Board was divided on the appropriateness of a front third story, and adopted a motion by a vote of 5-3 to approve a third story if it was sufficiently setback from the street and that the project should come back for further review.

### **Proposal**

The revised proposal presents an alternative solution to the visibility of the third story. Instead of substantially setting back the third story, the applicant has set back the third story only slightly more (a total of 3'6"), but has revised the front façade components to obscure how the third story would be seen from the pedestrian point-of-view on Ridge Street. The cedar wood sections are extended above the cornice line of the second story, with ends that turn and butt into the setback third story. The extended wood sections replace the horizontal balcony railings of the previous concept. Extending the wood sections results in a new façade proportion and the windows have likewise been extended to maintain their proportional relationship with the new height. Other minor revisions include new reveals at the edges of the wood sided sections so that they stand slightly proud of the adjacent metal and glass sections, and a new window configuration where transoms are positioned above, instead of below, the main sash.

### **Evaluation**

While not the prescribed revision the Board had in mind, the alternative solution is worthy of consideration. The revision takes advantage of the principal that, while the character of Ridge Street is of two-story houses, there is no one consistent two-story height. There is a range of heights and the revised concept utilizes this flexibility rising three feet higher than the height line established by the recessed metal sections of the façade. The applicant has included a geometric

study that exhibits that the extended second story heights conceal 54% of the third story as viewed from across the street.

The revised wood sections do take on a greater prominence and visual weight, and in that way draw attention away from the presence of the third story elevation just behind it. The new elevations establish a building height along the width of the row that is not inconsistent with the surrounding two-story character. However the top of the third story is not obscured, and as far as a building's height is largely expressed by its highest point, the third story is expressed to Ridge Street to essentially the same extent as before. If the impact of the façade on Ridge Street largely stems from its silhouette, the silhouette has changed only slightly.

As a side effect of extending the height of the wood sections of the façade, the proportions of the building faces and windows have changed in a way that is somewhat less consistent with the surrounding historic context. The adjacent historic houses are vernacular and exhibit short, squat proportions best exhibited by the ubiquitous six-over-six windows. While the previous concept successfully adopted this proportion to its contemporary design, the revised concept stretches out the windows especially to a more attenuated Victorian proportion that is not inappropriate to the historic district but is foreign to the particular character of this unusual street.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find that the revision does not comply with the Board's previous motion that found a third story at 448 Ridge Street NW to be compatible with the character of the historic district if sufficiently set back from Ridge Street, and that the application return to the Board for final approval.*